

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUCAR 05935 251224Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
SS-15 ICA-11 SY-05 MCT-02 /093 W  
-----106590 260059Z /64

R 251110Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1241  
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
USLO PEKING  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
USMISSION USNATO  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 5935

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS, RO, SCUL  
SUBJECT: MAJOR FIRE AT NATIONAL THEATER

1. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO MENTION WHATSOEVER IN ROMANIAN MEDIA, WE HAVE NOW PIECED STORY TOGETHER FROM A VARIETY OF ACCOUNTS OF A MAJOR FIRE AT NATIONAL THEATER IN CENTER OF BUCHAREST. FIRE APPARENTLY TOOK PLACE IN EARLY MORNING HOURS OF AUGUST 18 (OR POSSIBLY 24 HOURS EARLIER) COINCIDENT WITH HUA KUO-FENG VISIT. FIRE APPARENTLY BURNED UNDETECTED FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR, PRODUCED EXTREME HEAT, AND CAUSED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO ELECTRICAL SYSTEM AND AUDIENCE SEATING SECTION (BUT NOT STAGE ITSELF, WHICH WAS PROTECTED BY METAL CURTAIN) OF THE "LARGE" HALL; ADJOINING  
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"SMALL" HALL IS APPARENTLY UNDAMAGED, AND THERE IS LITTLE EXTERIOR SIGN OF DAMAGE TO BUILDING. TWO FIRE ENGINES ARE STILL LOCATED BEHIND BUILDING, POSSIBLY AS PRECAUTION AGAINST ELECTRICAL FIRES.

2. AT THIS POINT FACT STOPS AND RUMOR BEGINS. THE MAJOR ONES AND OUR COMMENT:

--IT WAS SABOTAGE. THERE IS A CONSENSUS AMONG OUR SOURCES THAT FIRE WAS WILLFUL ARSON PROFESSIONALLY DONE. WE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT CONFIRM, BUT CASE IS PERSUASIVE.

--THE RUSSIANS WERE BEHIND IT TO SHOW THEIR DISPLEASURE OVER HUA VISIT. ALTHOUGH ALL ROMANIANS WE HAVE TALKED TO CLAIM THIS AS "FACT", CASE IS FAR FROM PROVED. NEVERTHELESS, ROMANIAN REACTION IS INTERESTING IT ITSELF IF NOT UNEXPECTED.

--A "BESSARABIAN" HAD BEEN ARRESTED. COULD BE, BUT TIE BETWEEN ANY ACTUAL ARSONIST, DETAINED OR OTHERWISE, AND ANY PERSONS OR GROUP WHICH PUT HIM UP TO IT HAS NOT BEEN SHOWN.

--THE THEATER'S FOUR OR FIVE NIGHT WATCHMENT WERE ALL DRUNK, AND SEVERAL WERE EX-CONS RELEASED UNDER GOR'S PRISONER REHABILITATION PROGRAM. LIKELY, BUT IMPLICATION OF THEIR COLLUSION WITH ANY ARSONIST IS NOT PROVED.

--THEATER WAS TO BE SETTING FOR GALA PERFORMANCE IN HUA'S HONOR, ACTUALLY HELD NIGHT OF AUGUST 17, WHICH WAS SHIFTED TO SPORTS PALACE ONLY AT LAST MOMENT. HIGHLY DOUBTFUL; EVEN "LARGE" HALL IS MUCH TOO SMALL FOR KIND OF SHOW GOR HAD LONG PLANNED AND SUBSEQUENTLY PUT ON FOR HUA.

--THERE WERE OTHER FIRES AND SABOTAGE WHICH OCCURRED AT SAME TIME--AUGUST 23 MACHINERY FACTORY, POLYCOLOR DYE PLANT, A BRIDGE SOMEWHERE OUT OF BUCHAREST. NO CONFIRMATION; MOST LIKELY THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF THE ORIGINAL NATIONAL THEATER FIRE STORY.

--BUCHAREST MAYOR DINCA AND LESSER OFFICIALS ARE BEING CONFIDENTIAL

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HELD RESPONSIBLE AND ARE IN SERIOUS POLITICAL TROUBLE. HIGHLY LIKELY, GIVEN GOR PENCHANT FOR SEEKING SCAPEGOATS FOR UNTOWARD EVENTS. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, DINCA WAS WIDELY RUMORED TO BE ON THE POLITICAL SKIDS BEFORE THE FIRE, AND THIS MAY SEAL HIS DEPARTURE AS SOON AS IT CAN BE APPROPRIATELY ARRANGED.

AGGREY

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** FIRES, THEATER (DRAMA)  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 25 aug 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Executive Order:** GS  
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**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Review Event:**  
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**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** MAJOR FIRE AT NATIONAL THEATER  
**TAGS:** PINS, SCUL, RO  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbs://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/bc3af25a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
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